

**U.S. Department of Education - EDCAPS
G5-Technical Review Form (New)**

Status: Submitted

Last Updated: 10/13/11 12:00 AM

Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Boston Public Schools (U411C110112)

Reader #1: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	18
Sub Total	20	18
Total	20	18

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - 84.411C Tier 2 Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #1: *****

Applicant: Boston Public Schools (U411C110112)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

1. The Secretary considers the quality of the project evaluation. In determining the quality of the project evaluation to be conducted, the Secretary considers the following factors:
 - (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
 - (2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.
 - (3) The extent to which the proposed project plan includes sufficient resources to carry out the project evaluation effectively.

Note: We encourage eligible applicants to review the following technical assistance resources on evaluation

- (1) What Works Clearinghouse Procedures and Standards Handbook and
- (2) IES/ NCEE Technical Methods papers.

Strengths:

The narrative describes a multi-faceted approach to data collection for the TILT project, including student performance and teacher surveys. The inclusion of summative end-of-year student assessment data along with interim, during-the-year formative assessment data should enable programs adjustments within a school year, as well as provide substantial data for program impact analyses. The narrative describes a strong, quasi-experimental design using comparison schools in a time series. This should provide sufficient high quality data for analysis of program impact.

The evaluation design collects data on the major components of the project in both the treatment schools and comparison schools, which will facilitate further development of the TILT methods in BPS and other settings.

About 10% of the overall budget is allocated for evaluation, which is sufficient for an effective and thorough project evaluation. The AIR staff selected for work on TILT has experience in evaluation of projects similar in scope and complexity, and expertise in research and evaluation methodology.

Weaknesses:

The budget narrative does not provide any specific line item details that link resources to evaluation activities. The narrative only states that \$300,000 is allocated because that is the amount used for similar AIR project evaluations.

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Technical Review Coversheet

Applicant: Boston Public Schools (U411C110112)

Reader #2: *****

	Points Possible	Points Scored
Questions		
Selection Criteria		
Quality of the Project Evaluation		
1. Project Evaluation	20	16
Sub Total	20	16
Total	20	16

Technical Review Form

Panel #7 - 84.411C Tier 2 Panel - 7: 84.411C

Reader #2: *****

Applicant: Boston Public Schools (U411C110112)

Questions

Selection Criteria - Quality of the Project Evaluation

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 - (1) The extent to which the methods of evaluation will provide high-quality implementation data and performance feedback, and permit periodic assessment of progress toward achieving intended outcomes.
 - (2) The extent to which the evaluation will provide sufficient information about the key elements and approach of the project to facilitate further development, replication, or testing in other settings.
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Strengths:

The proposal describes teacher surveys, site visits, and document reviews to assess the quality of the implementation of the program. Because there will only be two schools implementing the program, the team should easily be able to keep track of the program implementation and development. The teacher surveys and student surveys provide good opportunities for the evaluation team to triangulate their findings from the site visits. The plan to assess outcomes appears as good as possible given the fact that this type of intervention cannot be implemented in anything approaching an experimental fashion. Using a regression discontinuity design / comparative interrupted time series framework appears appropriate and may be as rigorous as possible.

This project will clearly provide key information for replication as those hoping to replicate could choose to study the Edwards School Model, gather support from NCTL for the TILT model, or could look at the results of the implementation study proposed here. Any school leaders looking to implement this program could very easily find the details required to implement the program by reviewing the details of the implementation study.

Another strength of the proposal is that AIR is a consulting firm with an excellent reputation and a strong infrastructure. Moreover, for a study focused on only two schools and requiring little collection of primary data (much of the outcome data required should be administrative data from the schools), the amount requested appears more than sufficient.

Weaknesses:

While the methods appear strong overall, the evaluators may want to spend more time at each school. Two site visits may not be enough to truly highlight the development of the program at the two schools. The problem with any type of site visit is that the observation on that day might be an aberration. The way to deal with this is to increase the sample size of observations. Thus, a few more visits may be a good choice.

Using a regression discontinuity design appears appropriate; however, give the possibility that the two similar schools chosen as comparison schools provide a limited N (i.e. $n=2$), it is possible that the evaluation could be hindered by abnormal occurrences over the study years in those two schools. While there are only a few middle schools in the Boston District, there are also middle schools in surrounding inner-ring suburbs that may look like Boston middle schools. I would suggest a complementary analysis in which the researchers also build a comparison group from among all reasonably similar middle schools in the area, in which the comparison students are matched up specifically to a virtual twin in one of the treatment schools. Whenever we are unable to use the best (experimental) design, it can be worthwhile to use multiple analyses to check the robustness of the initial results.

One weakness of this proposal is that there is little information presented on how the \$300,000 is to be allocated. The proposal should spell out the funds that will be allocated to the specific aspects of the evaluation (i.e. the implementation study, the outcome study, etc.).

Reader's Score: 16

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